

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me and all my colleagues in thanking Betty Brady for her years of service to the Powder Springs, Georgia community.

LEAK OF SENSITIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, the leak of the sensitive personal information of millions of veterans and active duty military personnel by the Department of Veterans Affairs is a disgrace.

The information, including Social Security numbers, dates of birth and disability was taken from the VA to an employee's home via his laptop. When the laptop was stolen from his residence, the private, sensitive information of more than 26 million veterans and active duty troops were stolen with it, making them all potential targets for identity theft.

No employee of the Federal Government should have the ability to walk out of their office with that amount of personnel data on their computer. The administration needs to make sure that something like this never happens again.

The VA must also work with Congress to provide assistance to the millions of victims of this leak without affecting veterans' benefits. Veterans should have the resources made available to them free of charge to monitor their credit reports for suspicious action.

If any of our veterans or troops become victims of identity theft because of the security breach, they should not be held responsible. After all, it was by no act of their own that their personal information was compromised.

Last night, I introduced H.R. 5588, a bill that would ensure the veterans are protected in case of their stolen identity.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES GAINING GROUND IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as the House prepares to consider a resolution for victory in the global war on terrorism, I would like to congratulate U.S. troops and coalition forces for training Iraqi security forces.

In 3 years, coalition troops have transformed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi volunteers into battle-tested Iraqi security forces. The Defense Department's quarterly report recently stated that there are more than 263,400 trained and equipped Iraqi security forces. Additionally, the Iraqi Army

now controls 30,000 square miles of territory, an area roughly the size of my home State of South Carolina. Nearly two-thirds of combat operations are now conducted by Iraqis alone or jointly with coalition forces.

Day by day, Iraqis are defeating terrorists and gaining control over their country. Progress in Iraq is helping to ensure security in America, and we must remain committed to completing this critical mission protecting American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

REPUBLICAN RAID ON STUDENT AID INCREASES LOAN COSTS

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, with tuition costs rising and the availability of financial aid declining, many parents in our country are finding it harder and harder to afford the cost of college education for their sons and daughters. However, these families know the importance of having a college degree in today's economy. We really cannot underestimate the importance.

Therefore, large numbers are relying on student loans to help meet tuition costs. While these loans can be a great resource to make college accessible to more students, they can also cause great financial hardships for the borrower when they graduate and the payments are due.

The administration has supported making paying for these loans even more difficult by enacting their raid on student aid and cutting \$12 billion from the higher education budget. Because of these drastic and devastating cuts, interest rates on student and parent loans for college will increase significantly July 1.

To avoid this dramatic increase in interest rates, I encourage all Federal student loan borrowers to visit www.loanconsolidation.ed.gov to consolidate their loans before July 1.

KATRINA BILLS

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, this week several of my colleagues and I are circulating a chart listing 176 Katrina bills, out of which only a dozen have become law to date. As we sit here today, dozens of survivors are protesting the injustices suffered at the hands of FEMA. Hurricane season is upon us again, and FEMA continues to deny housing assistance to tens of thousands of needy families, many of them now rendered homeless.

New Orleans remains a toxic disaster zone that still looks much like it did the day after the hurricane. Despite the tens of billions of dollars spent on no-bid, sweetheart contracts, much of it wasted.

Will the 163 Katrina bills sitting in committee also go to waste? Or will Congress address the ongoing specific needs of the survivors by moving existing legislation and checking fraud and abuse by providing real oversight of appropriations?

The choice is ours.

□ 1230

HOUSE REPUBLICANS TURN BACKS ON MIDDLE CLASS; ECONOMIC INSECURITY GROWS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans have turned their backs on the middle class, and that is one of the main reasons an overwhelming majority of Americans want Congress to move in a new direction. Our constituents want us to work on behalf of all Americans, not just the wealthy few. But for 5 years now the Bush White House and Congressional Republicans have showered millionaires with large tax breaks while ignoring the economic conditions of the middle class. This year, while middle-class families received an average of a \$60 tax break, America's millionaires received a whopping \$65,000 gift from the Federal Government. And Washington Republicans call this fair?

It would be one thing if both the wealthy and middle class were both benefiting in today's economy, but again many of our constituents are facing uncertain times. Today, wages are stagnant, family debt is on the rise, health care benefits have either disappeared or increased dramatically, and savings levels have plummeted.

These are the economic conditions many of our constituents face today, but this House Republican majority seems content with the status quo; and it is time this House listened to hard-working middle-class Americans.

WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 6(a) OF RULE XIII WITH RESPECT TO CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 862, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 862

Resolved, That the requirement of clause 6(a) of rule XIII for a two-thirds vote to consider a report from the Committee on Rules on the same day it is presented to the House is waived with respect to any resolution reported on the legislative day of June 13, 2006, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5576) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my good friend from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 862 waives clause 6(a) of rule XIII requiring a two-thirds vote to consider a rule on the same day it is reported from the Committee on Rules. House Resolution 862 will allow the House to consider the rule for consideration of the Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2007.

The Rules Committee received numerous requests from the authorizing committees to expose portions of the bill that they feel represent legislating on appropriations bills. We are working through those requests now. Later today the Rules Committee will meet to thoroughly consider these requests and report out a rule.

Although we have not passed a final rule on this bill yet, Mr. Speaker, historically appropriations bills have come to the House floor governed by an open rule. I expect that we will continue to do so in order to allow each and every Member of this House the opportunity to submit amendments for consideration, obviously, as long as they comply with the rules of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this same-day rule so we can move forward to the rule on this important appropriation bill as soon as the rule is ready.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida, my good friend, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, for yielding me the time; and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a bit of trepidation about this rule and this process, which clearly circumvents the regular order of business of the House. I can find no reasonable explanation or sensible justification for going around the well-established rules of this body to bring the transportation appropriations bill to the floor today in this manner.

The majority has been so kind in explaining why it believes that this martial law is needed. Unfortunately, the majority's explanation has fallen a bit short on convincing this side of the aisle that we need to do this today and not tomorrow.

For the life of me, I can't figure out why this bill must come to the floor in this manner. It is, after all, only Tues-

day. You would think that after controlling the House for 11 years that my friends in the majority would have figured out how to bring a nonemergency appropriations bill to the floor under regular order. Indeed, there is simply no good reason to handle these bills outside the normal parameters of the way the House should conduct its business.

Moreover, when the House does operate this way, it effectively curtails our rights and responsibilities as serious legislators. When the leadership of this body bypasses the rules of regular order, as it is attempting to again do today, it really does discredit this great institution in which all of us are privileged to serve.

Realize, Mr. Speaker, my concerns are not content but rather process. This martial law rule sends a false message to the American people that this is what the Framers intended when they envisioned the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives ought to be a body of thought and deliberation, where America's greatest needs are given proper consideration. Under the majority, however, thought and deliberation have been replaced by rubber stamps and obvious disorganization. This is not a good thing, and it is a disservice to the American people.

I really do urge my colleagues to reject continued attempts to circumvent regular order in the House of Representatives.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would simply note that the Transportation, Treasury, HUD bill passed the full Appropriations Committee by a voice vote on June 6. In other words, without opposition, without noted opposition; and the bill was filed on June 9. It has been available for everyone to see and review for days now. It was also on the schedule since last week.

I have no further speakers on this side of the aisle. I would ask my good friend if he has any other speakers.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I was trying to allow that we go a bit longer only for the reason that the next agenda matter is not present for us. I won't make an accusation that that allows that my friends in the majority are having difficulty in organizing their efforts.

My good friend from Florida, for example, just commented that this has been a measure, or this is a measure, that was passed and that it has been known since June 9; and at the very same time, at the outset, you began by saying that we are in the process of determining what we are going to do before we report out the rule.

You know, we use a lot of beltway language here, and for a long time I didn't believe that there was a beltway mentality. The tragedy is now I, as well as others that I know, have become a part of it. Let me say what I am talking about.

When I say I am not talking about content, I am not talking about the substance of the transportation measure that is so critical to this Nation. What I really am talking about is the process where the Nation's representatives get an opportunity to speak on issues of vital concern. So, then, when we say that this rule circumvents regular order, as a general rule Jane and Joe Lunchbucket don't have a clue what we are talking about. So perhaps it would be helpful, since we have a little time, to explain to them what regular order would normally require for a nonemergency appropriations measure.

The rule that we are getting ready to present this transportation measure under also called for same-day consideration of legislation providing for the Department of Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, the District of Columbia and independent agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes. What it does is it circumvents one of the rules, which is 6(a) of rule XIII. That generally doesn't mean a thing to the American public, but let me tell them what it means.

That rule requires a two-thirds vote in order to consider a rule on the same day reported from the Rules Committee. Two-thirds of the Members of this House would have to do that. What we are doing with this rule is we are waiving that two-thirds requirement and we are saying it is all right, you can bring up any of these things under the same-day rule because it doesn't require two-thirds of the Members.

I can assure you if two-thirds of the membership were required in order for us to be able to proceed along regular order, it might not be difficult to achieve; but it would be fair for us to function that way. So we have ignored the process repeatedly here in the House of Representatives. And what that does is it creates a situation where Members in the House of Representatives who represent constituents don't get an opportunity to have their measures considered by the Rules Committee or by the House under regular order, thereby precluding them from having an opportunity to actually receive the best interests of their representative as it pertains to issues that are germane to their interests in their locales.

That is a long way to describe that when you waive the process, you waive the rights of the people that we represent to have their representatives present their views here on the floor of the House of Representatives and to have this great deliberative body work its will. Therein lies the rub with this particular kind of process.

It even has a distinct name: martial law. That sounds like something that is forcing something or requiring something to be done under the aegis of authoritarian rule. That is not right, and that is what we complain of, those of us that have the opportunity and privilege to do so in the Rules Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

PROVIDING FOR CERTAIN ACCESS TO NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION DATABASES

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4894) to provide for certain access to national crime information databases by schools and educational agencies for employment purposes, with respect to individuals who work with children.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4894

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ACCESS TO NATIONAL CRIME INFORMATION DATABASES BY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General of the United States shall, upon request of the chief executive officer of a State, conduct fingerprint-based checks of the national crime information databases (as defined in section 534(f)(3)(A) of title 28, United States Code, as redesignated under subsection (e)), pursuant to a request submitted by an entity of the State, or unit of local government, which is designated to conduct background checks on individuals employed by, under consideration for employment by, or volunteering for, a private or public elementary school, private or public secondary school, local educational agency, or State educational agency in that State in a position in which the individual would work with or around children. Where possible, the check shall include a fingerprint-based check of State criminal history databases. The Attorney General and the States may charge any applicable fees for these checks.

(b) PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.—An individual having information derived as a result of a check under subsection (a) may release that information only to an appropriate officer of a

private elementary school, private secondary school, local educational agency, or State educational agency, or to any person authorized by law to receive that information.

(c) CRIMINAL PENALTIES.—An individual who knowingly exceeds the authority in subsection (a), or knowingly releases information in violation of subsection (b), shall be imprisoned not more than 10 years or fined under title 18, United States Code, or both.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms “elementary school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary school”, and “State educational agency”, have the meanings given to those terms in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

(e) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 534 of title 28, United States Code, as amended by section 905(a) of the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-162), is further amended by redesignating the second subsection (e) as subsection (f).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

□ 1245

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4894 currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4894 sponsored by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER). This legislation provides our Nation's schools with an additional tool to ensure the safety of our schoolchildren when hiring teachers, staff and volunteers.

Children are our Nation's greatest resource. Parents trust that when they send their children off to school they will be provided a safe environment in which to learn. Teachers are vested with a tremendous responsibility of preparing kids for a successful future, and the overwhelming majority of our educators conduct themselves as consummate professionals.

Unfortunately, we sometimes hear about teachers who engage in criminal conduct involving students. These few bad apples not only jeopardize our children's safety, but tarnish the reputation of those in the educational community. While all incidents of this nature are an outrage, the tragedy of some is compounded when these deplorable actions are perpetrated by individuals whose past criminal record should have identified them as potential threats.

Today all States require some type of background check for school employees. Unfortunately, some individuals with alarming records of criminal conduct slip through the cracks. Last year police in Charlevoix, Michigan, discovered that a convicted sex offender was volunteering as the director of the AmeriCorp program for the local school district. The man had an arrest record dating back to 1964, including sex offenses involving children.

School officials submitted the man's date of birth, Social Security number and driver's license number for a background check through the State system. However, his criminal record did not show up because the man had legally changed his name some 20 years earlier. Authorities learned of his criminal history only after he underwent a fingerprint check for a weapons permit.

In May, a California teacher was convicted on 17 counts of molesting nine students. Just last week, a second California teacher was arrested on charges that he molested a third-grade student. Even more disturbing is that this man had been suspected of a similar incident in 1990 and arrested for attempted rape in 1994.

This bill gives States direct access to Federal fingerprint databases to make sure that convicted sex offenders never work in a school again. Many school districts are experiencing a surge in growth that in turn increases the demand for qualified teachers and staff. Schools are under added pressure to expedite the hiring process to meet this demand. H.R. 4894 streamlines access to the Federal fingerprint databases so schools can be confident that they are hiring upstanding teachers and staff.

The bill authorizes the Attorney General to provide States with accurate fingerprint-based background checks for current school employees and prospective faculty, staff and volunteers who work with children. Either the Attorney General or the State may charge a fee for the check. The background information may be released only to the appropriate school official or State education agency, and any person who exceeds this authority or misuses the background information may be fined or imprisoned for up to 10 years.

I commend the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) for his work on this issue, and urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, allow me first of all to say that in our work on the Committee on the Judiciary, and particularly the Subcommittee on Crime, there is no doubt that one of the most prevalent issues that we address is a way to protect our children, whether it is against sexual predators, whether it is against the heinous acts of individuals who not